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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (MICHAEL FORTIN AND JON MITCHELL)

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: WHA/CAR DIRECTOR MEETS WITH NATIONAL SECURITY MINISTER ON
CARIBBEAN BASIN SECURITY INITIATIVE

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED; PLEASE PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: WHA Caribbean Office Director Velia De Pirro discussed the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative on August 3 with National Security Minister Martin Joseph, who expressed pleasure over the nascent program. Joseph urged a regional approach and was pleased that his thinking was consistent our approach. De Pirro related the USG was working the CBSI in an interagency manner and encouraged Trinidad to do the same. CARICOM is in the final stages of preparing its security strategy and will present it at the August 13 Barbados working group meeting. The WHA/CAR Director further noted we were interested in reaching out to non-Caribbean state partners, like Canada. The Minister personally welcomed this, but needed to consult with CARICOM colleagues before the issue is discussed at the working group session. In a separate Foreign Minister August 4 meeting, De Pirro also was told of GOTT enthusiasm for the CBSI. END SUMMARY.

CBSI

2. (SBU) Visiting WHA/CAR Office Director Velia De Pirro, accompanied by the CDA and ECON/POLOff (notetaker), met August 3 with National Security Minister Martin Joseph to discuss next steps on the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative (CBSI). The Minister was accompanied by Defense Transition head Commodore Garnett Best and members of his International Affairs staff.

Well Prepared

3. (SBU) De Pirro said the U.S. was diligently preparing for the August 13 Barbados working group meeting, looking at overall security strategy for the region as well as potential projects. Noting his pleasure that the USG was taking a regional approach, the Minister replied CARICOM is in the final stages of approving a security paper to be tabled in Barbados. De Pirro queried about receiving a copy of the document prior to the meeting, but Joseph demurred saying it is still pending heads of government approval.

4. (SBU) The WHA/CAR Director added she would lead the USG interagency meeting team and encouraged Joseph to have Trinidad represented by all relevant GOTT agencies. The Minister answered his government was sending representatives from National Security, the Attorney General's office, and the MFA. De Pirro expressed her hope that progress on a consensus regional security strategy, action plan, and agenda/schedule for future CBSI meetings could move forward at next week's session.

Partners?

5. (SBU) Noting the Canadian government is interested in stepping up

activity in the Caribbean, De Pirro suggested Ottawa could usefully be included in the CBSI. If fruitful, this could be expanded to include other partner nations like Britain, France, the Netherlands, and Spain. The Minister responded he had no trouble with Canada's participation but could not speak unilaterally for CARICOM and needed to consult with his fellow National Security Ministers. Joseph and De Pirro agreed that Canada's participation in CBSI would be a useful topic to formally discuss in Bridgetown.

Funding

¶6. (SBU) Minister Joseph asked about CBSI funding. De Pirro recalled that the President announced an initial \$30 million for the initiative at the Summit of the Americas. The actual initial budget request, on what we hope will be a multi-year program with greater funding, was \$45 million. The House approved \$37 million, but the Senate has not yet appropriated any funds. De Pirro was hopeful a conference committee would back the initiative. Joseph said Trinidad and other CARICOM states intended to make their positive view of the CBSI known to key legislators as a way of encouraging funding.

Foreign Minister on Board as Well

¶7. (SBU) In a separate August 4 meeting with Foreign Minister Paula Gopee-Scoon, the WHA/CAR Director reinforced the value of the CBSI effort and briefed the Minister on its current status. The FM was grateful for the information and expressed enthusiasm about the

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initiative. Later that evening at a reception at the Charge's residence, the Foreign Minister informed De Pirro that she had spoken with Minister Joseph and named an MFA representative to join Trinidad's delegation to the Barbados' meeting.

¶8. (U) This cable has been cleared by WHA/CAR Director De Pirro.

KUSNITZ